



itinerary:
FEBRUARY
17-25
2009

vietnam itinerary

“Let me take you to the parts of Asia that I love, and share all the delectable flavors that I have been so fortunate to experience. Along the way, I’ll share glimpses of the culture and introduce you to some of the folks that I met, those who enchanted me with the idea that love, life and food – when woven together against the backdrop of family and tradition – is the most beautiful form of human civilization....”

“Everywhere I go, people celebrate and engage in food in every way you can imagine. No matter what time of day, be it breakfast, lunch or dinner, people crowd out on the sidewalks, sitting in front of billowing soup pots and sizzling woks, slurping and chewing endlessly. At the markets, the food stalls are packed as shoppers and workers stop for a bite to eat before facing the day. Out on the streets, food vendors – some pushing carts, others balancing pots across their shoulders – roam the neighborhoods, delivering food right to the doorstep. At weddings and other festivities – many of which are held at home – families and relatives joyously gather to cook and eat for days. How lucky I am, to have picked food as the window from which to gaze.”

-Excerpted from *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table* by Mai Pham

Day 1: Tuesday, February 17 (Ho Chi Minh City) You will be welcomed to Ton Son Nhat Airport and taken individually to the hotel based on the flight information given to us. When you arrive, go through immigration (be sure to keep the yellow exit form which you will need when you depart Vietnam) and baggage claim, then look for the tour guide holding a sign with your last name. Chef Mai Pham will welcome and meet the group at 5:00 pm in Salon I at the Park Hyatt Saigon for an orientation meeting. We will begin the evening with a cooking class with a local celebrity chef who will introduce us to the flavors of Vietnam, followed by dinner at a popular local restaurant. [Hotel: Park Hyatt Saigon, D](#)

[Ho Chi Minh City \(HCMC\)](#), still commonly referred to as “Saigon,” is a bustling metropolis with over five million people and is the largest city in Vietnam. HCMC is the most modern city in the country, defined by a host of luxury hotels, high-rise office and apartment buildings; an array of international restaurants and cafes; and an intense nightlife. Sights to see include: the grounds of the former U.S. Embassy, Reunification Hall, Cholon (Chinatown), Old Post Office, Notre Dame Cathedral, History Museum, Ben Thanh market, and numerous pagodas and temples. Excursions outside of Saigon include Tay Ninh, the Cu Chi tunnels, Vung Tau, Long Hai, and the Mekong Delta.

Day 2: Wednesday, February 18 (HCMC – Trang Bang) After breakfast we’ll visit one of Mai’s favorite street food vendors to indulge in warm sticky rice with fresh coconut and peanuts, then head out of Saigon to visit a traditional rice paper making village, a drive of about an hour and a half each way. We’ll first visit a family that has been making fresh bun noodles for generations and observe the whole process from rice grinding to dough

kneading and noodle making. Afterwards, we'll visit another family that specializes in making banh phoi suong or "dew moistened" rice paper. A light lunch at Hoang Minh 3 will allow us to experience the local traditional of noodle soups. We'll head back to Saigon and continue our tastings at Bengh Tan Market, one of Vietnam's best markets. After snacking on bun thit nuong, icy soursap shakes, and delicious coconut milk-based desserts, we'll explore the intriguing aisles of the market. After some time to rest or further explore the city, we'll stop for drinks and appetizers, and then have dinner at the Square One Restaurant at the Park Hyatt. [Hotel: Park Hyatt Saigon, B, L, D](#)

Day 3: Thursday, February 19 (Trang Bang – Hue) After a breakfast of Vietnam's beloved pho noodle



soup, we will depart for the airport for our flight to Hue. We'll arrive about 1:00 p.m. and transfer to the hotel. Lunch will be poolside, with a cooking demonstration of Banh Khoai and other specialties of Hue. In the afternoon we'll take a cyclo/pedicab ride through Hue's tree-lined streets to the citadel, where you'll have a chance to imagine what Hue must have been like in the 1800s. Dinner will be at a lovely restored private home in the garden district. We'll join Chef Trang and a local family for a hands-on cooking class, along with a home-style dinner with traditional Vietnamese music. [Hotel: La Residence, B, L, D](#)

[Hue](#) is the former royal capital and was the cultural, religious, and educational center of the country during the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, the city retains relics of its regal past, as apparent in the Thien Mu Pagoda, Royal Tombs, and the Citadel in the Forbidden City, a World Heritage Site. Hue's shady boulevards and pleasant atmosphere create an ideal environment for leisurely cycling and walking.

Day 4: Friday, February 20 (Hue) We'll begin our day with a freshly prepared bowl of spicy Bun Bo Hue for breakfast. Next we'll take a boat ride on the Perfume River, making stops at the Thien Mu Pagoda and the Minh Mang tomb. Lunch will be at a favorite local restaurant. In the late afternoon we'll visit a tofu factory by cyclo. Dinner will be a royal-style feast, followed by a cooking demonstration led by Mai. [Hotel: La Residence, B, L, D](#)

Day 5: Saturday, February 21 (Hue – Hanoi) We will take a flight to Hanoi, arriving shortly after 9:00 a.m. Our first stop will be KOTO for lunch, a restaurant organization that trains and helps needy kids find jobs in the hospitality field. We'll get an update on the project and on the donations that our Worlds of Flavor groups have made in previous years. On the way to the hotel, we'll visit the Temple of Literature and the old quarters of Hanoi known as "36 Streets and 36 Wares." Our evening will begin with a reception at Suzanne Lecht's gallery where we'll talk about the contemporary art scene in Vietnam. Dinner will be at one of our favorite Hanoi restaurants. [Hotel: Sofitel Metropole, B, L, D](#)

[Hanoi](#), the capital of Vietnam, has traditional small-town charm that contrasts with the bustling Ho Chi Minh City. Despite urbanization, Hanoi has preserved the architectural legacies of its French colonial era and has maintained the parks and lakes that are scattered throughout the city. Sights to see include: Old Quarter; Lake of the Restored Sword; Temple of Literature; One Pillar Pagoda; Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, Museum, and House; Ethnology Museum; Fine Arts Museum; and numerous pagodas and temples. Outside the city there are excursions to handicraft villages in Ha Bac province, the Perfume Pagoda, Mai Chau, Ha Long Bay, Cat Ba Island, Cuc Phuong National Park, Hoa Lu, Sa Pa, and Bac Ha.

Day 6: Sunday, February 22 (Hanoi) In the morning we'll make a trip to a noodle factory that produces the noodles for the restaurant serving our pho breakfast, and then visit the Ho Chi Mausoleum, Museum, and House. Next we'll be off to enjoy bun cha, or grilled Hanoi pork with rice noodles, a dish that the late Johnny Apple, Jr. of *The New York Times* declared among the best pork dishes he'd ever tasted. After some time to relax at the hotel or do a bit of shopping, we'll have dinner at a nearby restaurant. [Hotel: Sofitel Metropole, B, L, D](#)

Day 7: Monday, February 23 (Hanoi – Ha Long Bay – Hanoi) In the morning we'll depart for Ha Long Bay. We'll stop at Mr. Son's home to see his farm and get a glimpse of a typical farming community in the Red River Valley. At noon we'll board a boat for a four-hour cruise in the spectacular Ha Long Bay, designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO, where you'll be immersed in one of Asia's most incredible vistas of blue waters and thousands of magical limestone formations. After a visit to a floating fish market far out in the bay to buy our fish and shellfish, we'll enjoy a fresh seafood lunch on the boat. We'll return to Hanoi in the evening and dinner will be on your own. [Hotel: Sofitel Metropole, B, L](#)

Day 8: Tuesday, February 24 (Hanoi) The morning will be free for you to discover the many charms of Hanoi on your own. Spoil yourself at the spa at the hotel, or join an optional mid-morning walking tour. The tour will circle the lake and explore some of the interesting streets in the old quarter that we have not yet visited. We will meet up with the rest of the group (those not joining the walking tour) for lunch at the legendary Cha Ca Va Long restaurant. Your afternoon will be free for last minute shopping or packing. Our culinary tour will conclude with a fabulous farewell dinner at a new seafood restaurant. [Hotel: Sofitel Metropole, B, L, D](#)



Day 9: Wednesday, February 25 You will transfer to the airport for your departure flight.

Please note: all expenses, including transfers to the airport, accommodations, flight confirmation, meals, and tips are the responsibility of the participant at this point.

Hotel Accommodations

Park Hyatt Saigon, Park Room (<http://www.saigon.park.hyatt.com/>)

La Residence, Superior River View (<http://www.la-residence-hue.com/>)

Metropole, Classic Room (http://www.sofitel.com/sofitel/fichehotel/gb/sof/1555/fiche_hotel.shtml)



Instructor/Tour Leader [Mai Pham](#) is the chef/owner of Lemon Grass Restaurant and Lemon Grass Asian Grill and Noodle Bar in Sacramento; author of *The Best of Vietnamese and Thai Cooking* and *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table*; a regular columnist for *The San Francisco Chronicle* and contributor to *The Los Angeles Times*; host of the Food Network special “My Country, My Kitchen: Vietnam”; winner of an IACP award for distinguished journalism; a food and restaurant consultant; and creator of Mai Pham’s Lemon Grass Kitchens, a line of specialty Asian products for the foodservice industry.

Guest Presenters/Experts [Hoang Trang](#) is in charge of food and beverage for the M & T Company in Ho Chi Minh City, and collaborates on *Culture and Art of Food* and *Beverage* magazines. Born in central Vietnam, she graduated from Hue University with a B.A. in Vietnamese literature. She was one of the founding chefs of the New World Hotel’s highly acclaimed Hoa Mi Vietnamese restaurant, and later chef at the Temple Club Restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City. Ms. Trang has previously participated as a guest chef at the CIA’s Worlds of Flavor International Conference.

[Nguyen Dzoan Cam Van](#) is the author of many cookbooks on Vietnamese cuisine, and is recognized as one of the first culinarians to revive and promote Vietnamese cuisine during the economic reform years of the 1990s. She has hosted several national television programs, operates two restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, and consults with restaurants in Hanoi. Ms. Cam Van has previously participated as a guest chef at the CIA’s Worlds of Flavor International Conference.